



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the First Round of Local Elections held 25 May in Moldova

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Douglas A. Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 29, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States concurs with the preliminary assessment of the ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) of the local elections that took place May 25 in the Republic of Moldova. To quote that report, "the administration of the election, the legislative framework, and the conduct on voting day were generally in accordance with international standards and OSCE commitments" ... but, "in a regressive development, interference by the authorities and state-media bias marred the campaign period."

Specifically, the EOM listed a number of serious problems, including:

- Arrests and threats of arrest of candidates, including two incumbent mayors taken into custody as they were registering their candidacies;
- Allegations of widespread misuse of power by political and governing party authorities; and
- Biased and distorted reporting on the part of the state-run media in favor of candidates backed by the government and ruling party.

The ODIHR preliminary assessment is particularly disappointing considering the admirable record that Moldova had established on elections since independence. It is unfortunate that the recent trend of official interference and media bias, begun during last October's election for Bashkan of Gagauzia, continued last Sunday on a nationwide level.

Mr. Chairman, the United States remains firmly committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, but we are equally committed to the fundamental right of the Moldovan people, as of all other peoples, freely to choose their leaders through fair and democratic elections at all levels. We therefore urge the Government of Moldova to redouble its commitment to safeguard and ensure these rights and to prevent any repeat of the irregularities that occurred during and before the local elections on May 25.

The clearest demonstration of this commitment would be the timely implementation by Moldovan authorities of the four key recommendations made in the ODIHR preliminary assessment.

Thank you.